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Square With the World

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SQUARE WITH THE WORLD

By

Dustin Andrew Young

A THESIS

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The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

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SQUARE WITH THE WORLD

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University of Nebraska, 2014

Advisor: Aaron Holz

Memory influences everything in our lives. Massive amounts of information are stored from each experience and that data influences future thoughts and decisions. Included are the collective memories of daily headlines and images from pop-culture, as well as personal memories from my own history. Contemporary society is constantly inundated with emotionally charged imagery that aims to shock viewers by appealing to their sensibilities. By reworking the images to avoid shock and specificity, my artwork turns these depictions into mnemonic symbols that stir the mind with associations.

The technique of layering materials, whether in ink, watercolor, or graphite, reflects the manner in which memories are stored and recalled. Each new mark or layer affects the layers before and after its application. The images are constructed in a way to diffuse the emotive response when viewing the work while maintaining its personal significance and mnemonic capabilities.

The subject matter fluctuates from piece to piece, flowing between moments of clarity and confusion by employing a combination of abstracted and figurative drawings. Juxtaposing the images helps direct a narrative that remains purposefully vague. The equivocal nature of these images is intended to reflect the construction and organization of memory, which changes and evolves with each new experience. There are recurring motifs, but each drawing is a piece to a puzzle that makes up my

experiences and reflects the influence of shared memories of Americana that help define an American experience through personal history. Combining imagery collected from the Internet, pop-culture, and personal experiences develop an enigmatic narrative that allows the viewer to interpret the work through their own memories.

The visual vernacular of the Great Plains continues to be a strong influence. There are geographical and psychological references to the isolating distance between towns, the endless horizon line crushed by the enormous sky, the harsh, dead winters, and the contrasting summers filled with green life and baseball. Baseball is a common thread that weaves through my memories and has been a pivotal influence in understanding my experiences and pushed the work's conceptual development. It represents the duality of positive and negative memories that traverse a lifetime of experiences. The drawings are intended to evoke numerous associations that can be translated through the viewer's own experiences.